



# I. INTRODUCTION

The physical image of Riverside reflects the City's prosperity, well-being, and the value and contribution of agriculture, cultural diversity, industry and manufacturing, education, and architectural heritage of the city. The image of the City's residential neighborhoods and neighborhood shopping centers emphasizes a small-town character within an urban metropolis. The City's educational facilities, universities, and college provide the image of a college town. The physical image of Riverside provides an aesthetic that attracts the City's work force, employers, residents, and visitors.



## A. PURPOSE OF CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES

These Citywide Design Guidelines work to reinforce this physical image of Riverside. These Guidelines are intended to promote quality, well-designed development throughout Riverside that enhances existing neighborhoods, creates identity, and improves the overall quality of life within the City. The guidelines are intended to promote a desired level of future development in Riverside that:

1. Promote a positive physical image and identity of all types of development;
2. Provide guidance to the development community, architects/designers and property owners;
3. Promote a high quality of development that stimulates investment in and strengthening of the economic vitality of all areas of Riverside;
4. Promote design in context with existing development in the surrounding neighborhood as opposed to requiring thematic architecture;
5. Contributes to implementing the concepts and recommendations provided in the 2002 *Visioning Riverside* program;
6. Implements the objectives, policies and tools of the General Plan;
7. Supplement the contents of the Riverside Zoning Code on matters of design and aesthetics
8. Maintain and protect the value of property; and
9. Maintain a high quality of life and pride of ownership without causing unnecessary public or private costs or unduly restricts private enterprise, initiative, or innovation in design.



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The Guidelines are meant for use by homeowners, business owners, architects, and developers in achieving superior quality and design of new construction or additions to existing buildings. The Guidelines convey City policies about the design of buildings and structures, additions to existing structures, and new construction. However, they do not dictate solutions. Instead, the Guidelines define a range of appropriate responses to a variety of specific design issues.

These guidelines acknowledge prevailing architectural characters, design elements of historic and/or architectural significance, and development patterns within Riverside. These guidelines do not seek to impose any overriding architectural style, design pattern of development, or artificial themes. They seek to assist in promoting positive design characteristics throughout the City that exemplify Riverside's image and identity. The goal of these guidelines is to promote quality designs that have been carefully considered and that have well integrated building features and architectural elements rather than tacked on details. These guidelines complement required development standards per the City's Zoning Code by providing good examples of appropriate design solutions. Lastly, these guidelines strive to explain why good design is important.

## B. WHY GOOD DESIGN IS IMPORTANT

Good urban design can enhance the visual quality of the urban environment and invigorate the local economy by attracting people to Riverside. Urban design encompasses many components: the functional aspects of buildings and space, landscaping, safety and accessibility, and elements of a more subjective nature. The primary objective of good urban design is to achieve beautiful, inspiring, and successful urban districts.

Well-designed, well-built projects that fit into existing neighborhoods are good for the community. Good design:

1. Leads to occupant satisfaction and community pride, inspiring ongoing concern and care for the project or building
2. Enhances and helps stabilize neighborhoods, primarily through the pride and commitment of occupants or owners and the respect afforded the project by the community

*Good commercial design that is pedestrian scale in execution that uses a palette of rich visual and architectural features can create vibrant settings benefiting residents, business owners, and visitors.*



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3. Is durable and easy to maintain
4. Appreciates in value, all other things being equal



Good design can positively affect the quality of life in residential neighborhoods. Neighborhoods where the majority of homes are well maintained communicate pride and property owner investment.

During the first 30 years of the life of a home, only minor repair is needed. This includes painting, landscaping, and a variety of preventive maintenance or repairs. Thirty years is typically the point where major maintenance is required, such as stucco work, roofing, and other work needed to main the quality of housing.

Structures older than 50 years can require substantial upgrades to prevent functional or economic obsolescence. High cost typically is an impediment to maintaining and improving properties.

Many older neighborhood shopping centers and industrial areas in Riverside show signs of age and under investment. Stock architectural designs, deferred maintenance, poor lighting, lack of landscaping, and simple but cluttered signs can discourage shoppers from visiting the centers. The lack of visual appeal can indicate a need to reinvigorate community pride and a sense of ownership. Neighborhood shopping centers can benefit from high-quality building standards and better site design considerations.



*Vacant older neighborhood shopping center with dated appearance*



*Newly-constructed shopping center with high-quality building materials, architectural features, and landscaping*





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### C. HOW THESE GUIDELINES ARE ADMINISTERED

The Citywide Design Guidelines are a part a structure of policy documents that guide development in Riverside. The Riverside General Plan defines the community vision and establishes a fundamental framework to guide decision-making about development, land use, resource management, public safety, public services, and general community well-being. Both the Riverside Zoning Code (Title 19 of the Municipal Code) and Citywide Design Guidelines are implementing tools of the General Plan and apply to all properties in Riverside. The Zoning Code presents development regulations specifically applicable to new projects or substantial improvements to existing projects. The Design Guidelines are intended to improve overall urban design. A specific plan, such as the Downtown Specific Plan, applies only to a specific area. A specific plan implements the goals and policies laid out in the General Plan for a defined area that merits special treatment. Specific plans supplement the Zoning Code development standards and design guidelines for the project area.

#### 1. RIVERSIDE GENERAL PLAN

The Riverside General Plan establishes the foundation for moving from the Riverside of today toward the desired community of the future. This Plan guides the City to the year 2025 by establishing goals and policies that address land use, circulation, economic development, and urban design issues. Reviewed by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council, the General Plan serves as a basis for decisions that affect aspects of everyday life, from where residents live and work to how they move about. The General Plan is implemented by decisions that direct the allocation of public resources and that shape private development. In essence, the General Plan is the blueprint for the community's vision of Riverside.

#### 2. RIVERSIDE ZONING CODE

The Riverside Zoning Code is the City's major implementation tool for the General Plan. The Code regulates structures and uses of property within designated zoning districts by, for example, setting limits on building height, requiring setbacks, and specifying the percentage of a site which must be landscaped. These Design Guidelines complement the Zoning Code by providing urban design and architectural direction that the Zoning Code does not.





## 3. SPECIFIC PLANS

A specific plan is a detailed plan for the development of a particular area. Falling under the broader umbrella of the General Plan, specific plans provide more restrictive standards for the types of uses permitted, development criteria (setbacks, heights, landscape, architecture, etc.), design guidelines, and circulation and infrastructure improvements. Specific plans are often used to ensure that multiple property owners and developers adhere to a single common development plan, as well as to provide flexibility in development standards beyond those contained in the Zoning Code.

For example, the Downtown Specific Plan guides development specifically within Downtown. The Specific Plan provides goals, objectives, policies, development regulations, implementation, and design guidelines for Downtown Riverside. The design guidelines established for Downtown in the Specific Plan supercede these guidelines. These Design Guidelines apply to all areas of Riverside not previously covered by a specific plan.



## 4. DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines provide site planning, architectural, and landscape architectural criteria pertaining to forms of development. Design guidelines can be both qualitative and quantitative. Typically most design guidelines are qualitative, meaning that, they provide, through descriptions and illustrations, a manner in which a project should be designed related to land use, building type, and spatial setting. Qualitative guidelines allow for considerable flexibility and interpretation as long as the intent of the guidelines is upheld. Quantitative design guidelines are more finite, typically written with a specific numerical component, such as a certain measurement (e.g. setback width) or preferred quantity (e.g. percentage of landscape coverage). While these guidelines provide flexibility, the numbers specified relate to a desired image or characteristic that enhances the quality of development.

For example, the Citywide Residential Historic District Design Guidelines provide design criteria to help preserve and assure historically appropriate development of Riverside's residential Historic Districts. The guidelines established in this manual supercede these guidelines pertaining to design treatment of residential properties in the historic districts discussed in the document.



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### D. APPLICABILITY

The provisions in this guidelines manual are applicable to the proposed development of all Residential, Commercial/Mixed Use, Industrial, and Public Facilities uses within the City of Riverside. Design review is required for any proposed building, structure, or sign, or for any new landscaping associated with such improvements as visible from the public right-of-way and, therefore, shall adhere to these guidelines, as applicable. It should also be noted, that these guidelines do not affect existing buildings which are not proposed for new construction, exterior modifications, or modification in landscaping or irrigation plan.

#### 1. EXEMPTIONS

When in compliance with all other City codes, the following projects are exempt from design review:

- a. Any restoration, rehabilitation, alteration, development, construction, demolition, removal or appearance change of any landmark, landmark structure, landmark site or any structure or site within a preservation district which requires the granting of a permit by the Cultural Heritage Board or the City Council on appeal.
- b. Development of four or fewer single-family dwelling units in any residential zone district other than the RC zone district.

#### 2. LIMITATIONS

In addition to the projects exempt from design review, the following general limitations apply to all development:

- a. Design review shall not consider elements of the design that are not visible beyond the boundaries of the site.
- b. Design review for a manufactured dwelling shall apply only to the approval of foundation, roof material, roof pitch, roof overhang, siding material, and any structural attachments.

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*These Guidelines are to be used by the public in the design of projects and by City staff and decision-makers in the Design Review process specified in Chapter 19.720 of the Zoning Code (Title 19 of the Riverside Municipal Code).*  
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## E. ORGANIZATION

The Guidelines are organized in chapters according to major land use categories. General areas and/or uses addressed include:

- ❖ Single-family residential neighborhoods,
- ❖ Multi-family residential development,
- ❖ Commercial centers,
- ❖ Neighborhood shopping centers,
- ❖ Mixed use developments,
- ❖ Industrial and business park areas, and
- ❖ Public facilities.

Topics include site planning, building massing and scale, quality architectural appearance, landscaping, privacy protection, signage, lighting, and parking. The last section of this manual includes definitions of key terms used in this document.

## F. HOW TO USE THESE DESIGN GUIDELINES

These guidelines should be used as a starting point for the creative design process. They should not be looked upon as the only design solution. Instead, property owners/architects/designers are encouraged to be creative and innovative, looking beyond franchise and “cookie-cutter” architectural and landscape architectural design treatments. It is necessary that property owners consult with City staff and any affected residents and/or business owners in the design process prior to development of a design.

*Project proponents should review the entire set of design guidelines prior to beginning the project's design process.*







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## I. INTERPRETATION OF DESIGN GUIDELINES; “SHOULD” VS. “SHALL”

To assist in understanding the full intent and/or requirement of the various provisions found in the design guidelines, applicants should be informed as to the meaning and context of the words “should” and “shall”, as well as “encouraged” and “discouraged”, as used in the Guidelines. These words will be used consistently throughout the document to describe the intent of each guideline.

Guidelines that use the word “should” are intended to express the City’s desire and expectation. These guidelines are meant to be applied with some flexibility. They indicate that the City is open to design features that are equal to, or better than, that stated — as long as the intent is satisfied. The applicant assumes the burden of proof to demonstrate how a proposed design meets this test, and determinations will be made by the Planning Director or other authorized decision-maker per Chapter 19.710 of the Zoning Code (Administrative Design Review).

Guidelines that use the word “shall” are specific requirements from the City. These standards are absolutely mandatory and offer relatively little flexibility unless choices are provided within the statement itself. All projects must include these elements as described. Regardless of which term is used, each guideline as it pertains to each individual project must be addressed by an applicant. The City will expect to see how the design of a project responds to every one of the guidelines, as applicable.

Guidelines that use the word “encouraged” or “discouraged” are intended to express a more or less desirable design solution. While, they are not direct requirements, these guidelines allow for considerable flexibility and interpretation whose intent must be upheld. Applicants will be expected to prove how the project’s design implements a particular guideline as deemed applicable by City staff



*This industrial building’s blank, unarticulated façade would be undesirable and deemed “discouraged”.*



*This industrial building’s well-articulated façade would be desirable and deemed “encouraged”.*





## 2. RELATIONSHIP TO THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Applicants of new development or rehabilitation must follow a development review process administered by City Planning staff in order to complete site and building improvements. Design review is one part of the overall process.

At the beginning of any project, prior to drafting any significant design plans, applicants should meet with a City staff member from the Planning and Building Department. At this meeting, City staff can provide time and cost-saving information on the discretionary approvals necessary for project approval and any City codes and ordinances that may affect or apply to the proposed project and its design. City staff can also provide valuable information pertaining to permits, processing, and timelines. This meeting also provides an opportunity to better understand the project's specific design objectives and expectations between the proponents and City staff.





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